

## CHAPTER XIII

### MIDDLEFIELD IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

**A**FTER surveying the century and more of history, it is interesting to turn to the Middlefield of to-day, and to take account of the conditions and the new possibilities which have emerged during the first years of the twentieth century. The changes which had been slowly but surely taking place after the time of the first flood have continued. Until the turn of the century, there was always the hope that the days of industrial prosperity in Blush Hollow might return. But the second flood placed that hope beyond the possibility of immediate realization. During the years since 1901 all vestiges of the large factories have disappeared, the tenement houses have been taken down and removed, and the river valley would scarcely be recognized by one who had not visited it for thirty years. The fine mansion of Sumner Church still stands as a monument of the days of former prosperity, but the reason for its existence has to be explained to the newcomer. Middlefield has become an exclusively agricultural town, and the relentless pressure of economic forces is eliminating those who are not possessed of the intelligence and the industry to make of agriculture a profitable occupation. The population shows a general decline, and the indefatigable purpose of the citizens to maintain high standards of community life, good roads and good schools, requires an unselfish devotion which deserves the highest praise. In this high purpose there has been a notable reinforcement from those who have chosen Middlefield for their summer home, and who have entered heartily into the enterprises of the town.

Perhaps nowhere is the change more noticeable than in the Center. With the coming of the automobile, the rural delivery of mail, the telephone, and the mail order business, facilitated by the parcel post, the need of a trading center has been greatly diminished. It is only within recent years, however, that the old



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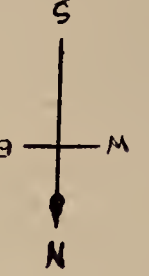
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MIDDLEFIELD  
MASS.  
1924

F.C. SMITH





community at the Center has virtually disappeared during the winter months. The post office, and the parsonage, and the telephone exchange at Mr. Cook's are the only year round necessities. The other houses are now almost all summer residences. The contrast between the vigorous village life in summer and the rows of silent houses in the winter is striking. It again emphasizes the fact that the new Middlefield is a purely agricultural community. There is no industry or trade in the Center which would afford a livelihood to-day. But the church, town hall, library, post office and central office of the telephone are so essential that the village, with all its changes, will continue to be the center of the community life.

More than once the government has raised the question whether there is really need of a postoffice any longer for Middlefield. The rural delivery from Chester and from Hinsdale serves a large portion of the inhabitants. But each time when the question has been raised, the citizens have been able to persuade the government to continue the post office. The amount of money order business done in winter as well as in summer is surprisingly large. The store at the Center has been intermittently operated by changing proprietors. It is a great convenience to have a store; but the automobile makes trading at other centers so easy that there is really less support for a general store than the project deserves. The storekeeper must receive part of his reward in the consciousness that he is rendering a public service. The store at Baneroft conducted by Mr. Fleming, has a less precarious existence, owing to the continuance of a small industrial population connected with the paper mill and the railroad, and also to the occasional patronage of those who come to the railroad station for travel or for shipping of goods.

The last quarter century has seen the passing of some strong men and women whose vigorous personalities and sterling characters have been wrought into the life of Middlefield. Mr. Oliver Church, Mr. Jonathan McElwain, Mr. and Mrs. Asher Pease, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Pease, Mr. and Mrs. George Bell, Mr. and Mrs. E. James Ingham, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bryan, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Robbins, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Smith, Mrs. Lydia Geer, Miss Mary E. Church, Mrs. Charles Wright, Mrs.

Edwin S. McElwain, Mr. Orrin and Miss Nancy Wheeler, Deacon and Mrs. Barton Graves, Deacon Harlow Loveland, Mrs. Lucy S. Newton, Mrs. John Cody, Mr. and Mrs. Metcalf J. Smith, Mr. George W. Cottrell,—these constitute only a partial list of names of the old stock, who have left their mark upon the town. In the majority of these changes, occasioned by death, the family names disappeared from the roll of permanent Middlefield residents, joining the names of the Macks, Dicksons, Blushes, Taylors, Spencers, Combses, Metcalfs, Roots and others which had already passed from the roll.

If it were possible this chapter might be enriched by citing the contribution of many of these families to the life of the town. Let one name suffice, of a man who wrought righteousness and subdued kingdoms in the comparative obscurity of the hill town. Metcalf J. Smith, college-bred, fitted by temperament and training to be a teacher and leader of men, was called back in early manhood to care for the old farm home in the declining years of his father. The sacrifice of a career proved to be permanent, but his alert, richly-furnished mind and rare personality became a permanent factor in the life of Middlefield. Here with his noble wife, he spent a long lifetime and together they reared their family. Intelligently and devotedly, Mr. Smith served the community as teacher, founding a Select School, developing the library, chief counsellor in all the higher affairs of the town; humbly and graciously expressing his life in the church and in other forms of community leadership. He lives in hundreds of lives made richer and more useful by the touch of an unselfish, inspired teacher. Not one of his contemporaries would question the justice of ascribing to Mr. Smith and his wife the pre-eminent place of ennobling, educative influence in the wider community of which Middlefield was the center.

We have mentioned the passing of old names from the roll. Equally significant are the names which persist and perpetuate the fine old traditions of the town. Edwin S. McElwain and his son, George, the fourth and fifth generations, still cultivate the ancestral acres that have been in the family for more than a century and a quarter. The recent advent of George McElwain, Jr., introduces the sixth generation in direct line from the pioneer, Timothy McElwain. W. Ovid Eames and his wife (Ida

(Bell) Eames, carry on the old Bell farm. At this home, too, lives Miss Fannie Quigley, sister of the late Mrs. George Bell. Arthur D. Pease and Mrs. Lura (McElwain) Pease combine in their household two of the old families, and sustain the tradition of hospitality at the old Blossom Tavern, which has been in the Pease family for over a hundred years. Henry S. Pease has recently built a new house upon the site of the one he inherited from his father, Asher Pease. Edwin H. Alderman conducts the farm of his father, the late Daniel Alderman. Mrs. Daniel Alderman, representing the Hawes family, still spends her summers at the old homestead. Clark B. Wright and his wife, Mary (McElwain) Wright maintain the fine stock farm, Glendale, which has been a source of pride to three generations of Wrights.

Wesley A. Olds and his wife, Adelaide (Cottrell) Olds, are on the Olds farm on the River Road at the foot of Glendale Falls. G. E. Cook and his wife, Helen (Wright) Cook, occupy the Charles Wright homestead. Willis B. Graves, and his wife, Clara (Ferris) Graves, carry on the old Graves farm on the West Hill, while Cooley W. Graves and his wife, Kate (Bryan) Graves, live on the road to Middlefield Station as do their son, Roy Graves, and his wife. Mrs. Laura Chipman resides on the Chipman farm conducted by her son, Wesley J. Chipman, while his brother Frank carries on the adjoining farm of their grandfather, Harvey Root. The Asa Smith farm in Smith Hollow is occupied by Walter Smith. Frank A. Cottrell and his wife, Laura (Waite) Cottrell, carry on the farm originally belonging to Calvin Smith, and owned for many years by Frank's father, George W. Cottrell. John Ferris occupies the Orrin Wheeler homestead. Ralph Bell and his wife, Eila (Pease-Kelley) Bell, own the old Jonathan McElwain farm. The third Sternagle generation is living on the farm once owned by Deacon John Newton. Harry Pease, third generation in his line, is cultivating the old Amasa Graves farm. This is a long and honorable list of names. It reveals the fact that, in spite of all changes, the families which in the past have made Middlefield what it was are continuing to keep alive the good name of the town.

This list, however, does not tell the whole story. Some of the descendants of the old stock, who live elsewhere for most of the year, continue their interest in Middlefield by summer resi-



dence and in other ways. The old Matthew Smith farmhouse, built in 1806, is owned by a great-grandson of the builder, Louis C. Smith of Newton Center, who makes the farm the summer home of his family. On the McElwain farm, R. Franklin McElwain of Holyoke, has an attractive cottage, with a chimney and large fireplace built of field stone. His brother, Dwight McElwain, owns the Babson cottage in the adjoining lot which was originally a part of the McElwain estate. The Blush Tavern, the home for several years of Mr. and Mrs. Metcalf J. Smith, is the summer residence of their daughter, Kate W. Smith. The Sumner and Oliver Church mansions are still held by their heirs, the former by Mr. John W. Crane and his daughter, of Springfield, and the latter by Miss Alice B. Church. For many years the late Mrs. Edward P. Smith (Julia Mack Church), of Springfield, made her summer home at Maplecroft, which was built by her grandfather, Uriah Church, Jr., over eighty years ago. Professor Gerald Birney Smith of the University of Chicago has removed the old Alexander Dickson house to the north end of the village and occupies it for a summer home. Dr. Arthur Smith, of Bayonne, New Jersey, son of George Smith, owns the Charles Smith place in Smith Hollow.

But Middlefield rejoices not only in the representatives of the families that have been in the town from early days. Those who have more recently come, either as permanent or as summer residents, have won a large place in the community. Some of them are now as much a part of the town life as are the older families. Mr. G. E. Cook, at the Charles Wright farm, is now one of the foremost citizens, whose advice and help are sought in all important enterprises. Everyone cherishes the genial friendliness of John Cody, who has lived for many years in the old Solomon Root house. Mrs. Cody's fine Christian spirit and boundless hospitality endeared her to all; and the town is justly proud of the fine records which the members of the younger generation have made. James Cody, whose house occupies the site where Pastor Nash lived, is taking his father's place as one whom people call upon for repairs and construction work. Miss Sarah Chamberlain, who occupies the Deacon Ingham house for a part of the year, is indispensable to the summer residents. Her conscientious care in opening and closing their houses and keep-



ROAD TO BANCROFT  
RAILROAD ARCH OVER FACTORY BROOK

ing things in order is worthy of the best Middlefield traditions. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mulcay render an important service to the community by keeping the store and post office in their house, the John L. Bell place, which Rev. Francis A. Fate of Glastonbury, Connecticut, formerly owned.

Of the houses at the Center now owned by summer residents, Mrs. Bottum's house was bought by the late H. A. Abbe of Springfield. The Geer house, purchased by Professor Herbert A. Youtz of Oberlin, Ohio, is now owned by Mrs. May Youtz of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The last owner of the store building and the neighboring house was A. G. Hatch. The former Baptist parsonage, until recently owned by Mrs. Gertrude Pease, is now the summer home of the Griffin family of Shelton, Connecticut. The Orrin Pease house was finely restored by William A. Birnie, of Springfield, whose lamented death has brought his brother, Judge Birnie, into possession. South of the Center the David Mack homestead has been restored by Rev. John Brittan Clark of Washington, D. C. The Milton Smith farm on the opposite side of the road has been unoccupied since the regretted removal of John T. Bryan, who was one of the leaders in the community.

With the burning of the Congregational meetinghouse and town hall in 1900 Middlefield was confronted at the very beginning of the century with the task of erecting new public buildings. After differing views on the style of the new church had delayed rebuilding it until 1903, it was decided to use materials nearest at hand and reconstruct them as well as available funds would permit. The result was the purchase of the Baptist Church and its removal to the site of the burned meetinghouse. The cupola was removed and the windows altered into something considered in 1903 more ecclesiastical than the original ones. An elaborate window was inserted in the bare pediment. The interior was also altered, the original plastering covered with sheathing, hiding the chilly panelled wall paper, and the gallery removed, while the pews were arranged in amphitheater style. An ornamental metal ceiling, the gift of Mr. Asher Pease, was also installed. To this remodelled Baptist meetinghouse an ell was added composed of the former Methodist meetinghouse, which was not greatly altered inside, although one gable of its

roof was changed to a hip, to agree with the slope of the main part. This ell was to serve as a Sunday School and lecture room. To complete the structure a new tower was built in a subdued "renaissance" style, in the angle between the main part and the lecture room. There was no steeple to the new tower, a belfry slightly suggesting the Spanish-American style, taking its place.

One sees in the arrangement the inspiration of the English village Gothic, with its church tower in the angle, but as a whole one must admit that the structure does not represent any coherent method of building or ornamentation. While with the advice of a competent architect it might have been possible to restore to the Center a church with genuinely New England aspect, using the Baptist Church as a nucleus, criticism should not be levelled against the building committee, for the public opinion in America as a whole was in a perfectly chaotic state at that time, and the professional architects were among the worst leaders of the blind. On the whole, considering the kind of houses and public buildings that were being put up in those days, the Middlefield community is to be congratulated on having made no more violent departure from the old traditions. The church might easily have been a "Queen Anne affair," with gable and shingles and eccentric porches, or perhaps some sort of an imitation of the commercial romanesque with heavy arches of stone or even of wood. From this fate which many country communities and cities have not escaped, Middlefield was fortunately protected.

The replacement of the town hall was a simpler problem. A building quite similar to the burned one was erected on the same foundation, though the higher pitch of the roof makes the building appear narrower, and there is less ornamentation. The interior arrangements, however, embodied some improvements. On the ground floor a side room was provided for the town library. Upstairs a hardwood floor anticipated the days of community dances. The small boxed-in platform of the old hall was improved upon by a wider stage extending across the end of the hall, greatly facilitating the presentation of theatricals as well as public business. A later addition provided a woodshed downstairs, and a dressing-room back of the stage upstairs conveniently reached by an outside staircase. Electric lights were installed in 1922.

Other new buildings at the Center have been built as a result of the increasing interest in Middlefield as a summer resort. One of the first efforts to provide for summer visitors was that of the Youtz brothers who converted the dwelling adjacent to the Mack store into "The Middlefield Inn" in the summers of 1903 and 1904, carrying on the store and the stage line also. After two years G. E. Cook continued this enterprise by constructing "The Golden Glow,"—now known as "The Wayside Lodge,"—using as a nucleus the classic farmhouse of the late Hiram Taylor. One ell was built on the west end and another on the north, the timbers of the latter coming from the old wool-drying shop and horse shed of the Church Brothers in Blush Hollow. A large piazza extends nearly around the building. While architectural ambitions are almost wholly lacking in this building, it is by no means unsuccessful in its exterior, which suggests with much truth its actual character,—that of an inn in a small country village. Here through the passing years Mrs. A. H. McClure and Mrs. Thomas Muleay have entertained many out-of-town guests and also provided excellent meals for other summer residents of the community.

A little south of the Wayside Lodge on the opposite side of the village street is the large summer residence built by Thomas and Sophia (Smith) Martin, of Hartford. This house is of a type familiar along New England seacoasts, the solid, hip-roofed, "piazzaed" summer home, built to stand weather and to shelter an ample family with guests. Thoroughly home-like and plain, this house is not without a certain dignity of line, though quite different from the Oliver Church mansion across the way. But it is not especially characteristic of the hill-town in which it is placed. It is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Newton C. Smith of West Medford, Mrs. Smith being a daughter of John Henry Smith, of the Matthew Smith branch of this large family.

A more interesting house is that built during the last decade by Mrs. George Roberts, of Hartford, south of the village near the old Mack house. Here is a very strong effort made to build a comfortable summer house, large in scale and thoroughly modern inside, which should at the same time be fully in the spirit of the houses of a century and a quarter earlier. As the picture shows, the architect has reproduced with great fidelity some of



HOUSE OF MRS. GEORGE ROBERTS



HOUSE OF THOMAS MARTIN

the most characteristic elements of the oldest houses: the large central chimneys, the plain surface, the absence of cornice, the proportions and arrangement of windows, the absence of piazzas from the sides visible from the road. On the whole, while nobody would confuse the twentieth century house with one of the settlers', its prevailing harmony with the old farmhouse in spirit and line is unmistakable. The effort thus made is one well worthy of imitation and the style thus set in this extensive house might well be further developed in smaller buildings which could be made no less comfortable and at the same time still more closely in keeping with the century old buildings still standing on the country roads.

Of the small summer houses about the Center the first to be built was the cottage of J. K. Upham, of Brooklyn, New York, located near the Parsonage Lot, and now owned by Mrs. George Roberts. The bungalows of David C. Coe and of Charles W. Shaw, of Springfield, situated near the Town Hall and the Wayside Lodge respectively, are not only of pleasing design but are constructed of native field stone, a material most appropriate to the rugged environment. The former is now owned by Dr. Amber A. Starbuck, also of Springfield. The most recent bungalow, that of Professor Herbert A. Youtz, occupies a slightly position on the slope south of the Cattleshow Grounds.

To note the changes east of the Center, Richard Sweeney and his family have occupied the "Squire" Matthew Smith farm for many years, steadily improving both the land and the buildings. With commendable enterprise Mr. Sweeney's sons have built an attractive bungalow on the site of the old Combs place in anticipation of the demand for summer residences. Richard Sweeney, Jr., is also owner of the old Cottrell place on Ridgepole Road. Further north on this road at the James Ingham place is Samuel Willard whose mechanical skill is often of service to his fellow townsmen. On the Howard Smith farm the Teffts family have modernized the house with porches and a stone chimney, and have developed a large peach orchard. In Smith Hollow James N. Cone owns the productive Oliver Smith farm, and "Colonel" James Anderson, of Springfield, occupies the Orrin Smith place as a summer home. North of the Center are the Gardners at the old James Church farm, and Victor Hoskeer

on the Deacon Harry Meacham place and Mr. Russell at the David Hamilton house just beyond.

In the Pease District another summer colony has been gradually developing, largely as the result of the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur D. Pease, who have taken in many summer guests. The old gambrel-roofed Metcalf house near by, now owned by Mrs. W. A. Pearson of Springfield, has been merged into a larger structure of modern design, but the interior of the older portion has been preserved. In similar fashion the Harlow Loveland house has been utilized as an ell for a large three-story boarding house, known as "The Berkshire House," by the Hespelt family. In the Den region the original Churchill homestead has been restored with large stone chimney and fireplaces by Herbert Knox Smith, Esq., of Hartford, who was Commissioner of Corporations under President Roosevelt. On the slope north of the cross-road from Arthur D. Pease's to the Chester Road is the log bungalow built by the late Rev. George H. Ferris, of Philadelphia, and until recently owned by Rev. Lewis T. Reed of Brooklyn, New York. A short distance north of the Pease farm is the snug cottage of E. A. Evans, of New Haven, Connecticut. New houses have been built by permanent residents. Henry S. Pease has replaced his house and barn which were destroyed by fire a few years ago. The house is a comfortable, unpretentious and solidly built dwelling, not without sturdy squareness which suggests the original house built by Morgan Pease. The old Andrew Meacham farm on the road to the Alderman farm, long abandoned, is now owned by George Millot who has erected a house and barn near the site of the old house. Another old farm, that of Daniel Root in the railroad valley, is being worked again by Herbert Cross, with new buildings in the process of construction. Other new families during this period are the Prews at the Howe place in the Den, the Dyers at the Timothy Root place on the Chester Road and the Pierces at the Elbert Pease farm.

West of the Center, Frank Johnson until recently carried on the Dolman farm, formerly the Deacon Leonard place. Jesse Pelkey has followed his father, the late Nelson Pelkey, at the John Smith farm near the foot of Town Hill, where his son Irving and wife also live. The burning of the Lyman Church



house just below removed a familiar landmark from this region. The Uriah Church homestead with the old "Company Barn" and the surrounding land are now known as "Rock Maples Farm," the present occupant of which is Frank Stevens. The old red house opposite the Blush Hollow schoolhouse was renovated for a dwelling by Fred L. Boyer, who took over the saw-mill business of Frank Curtiss. His services as a skillful builder, previous to his physical incapacity, are gratefully remembered by the community. Joseph Pelkey lives near by in one of the houses built by Frank Curtiss. Two new buildings have brought a modern touch to this valley. On the wooded hill-side opposite the Sumner Church house Alfred S. Crane, of Springfield, has constructed a bungalow of solid maple logs and cement, well suited to the woods out of which its low roof seems to grow. On the site of the old white boarding-house in the lower village is the substantial and attractive concrete bungalow built by Peter Boyer, whose removal from town took away an accomplished artisan. It is now occupied permanently by Miss Elizabeth Evans, who formerly lived at the John Williams house on the road to Harry Pease's farm. Near by on the opposite side of the road is the tiny cottage of Marshall Boyer. Further south the old Mary Leach house is owned by Miss Fannie Stebbins of Springfield.

At "The Switch" the destruction of the paper mill by fire has occasioned a reduction in the number of permanent residents on the Middlefield side of the river. Thomas H. Fleming has kept the store which houses the Bancroft post office for many years. His son, Bernard, is the station agent. Mr. Fallon is section foreman on the railroad. Misses Clara and Mari Tracy live opposite the paper mill property. Jerry Romano lives in the white house above the railroad arch bridge. On West Hill, Edward and John Savery have steadily improved the farm and buildings of the old Ely place. The Ferris farm and homestead have been rejuvenated by the Drozd family. The ancient William Taylor place once owned by the Bardin family, is occupied in the summer by the Edens of Springfield.

The record of changes in the life of the town must be corrected and balanced by some account of certain permanent factors. An outstanding characteristic of the Middlefield people is their



BUNGALOW OF REV. HERBERT A. YOUTZ

BUNGALOW OF MR. ALFRED S. CRANE

BUNGALOW OF MR. CHARLES W. SHAW

loyalty to the old hill-town. This loyalty is illustrated first by the number of descendants of the old stock, who bravely facing the none too easy economic conditions, still reside in Middlefield. It is illustrated also in a marked degree by the return each summer of the loyal descendants now located in other parts of the country. Every summer witnesses a reunion of the scattered families. This is fostered by the annual Field Day, and by two days of Cattle Show, which for two generations have served as an annual Homecoming time.

A recent expression of the spirit of Middlefield was the action of its citizens when a disastrous fire wiped out in one night the home of one of its leading citizens in 1919. Facing the loss of his home and barn, Henry S. Pease, town treasurer and clerk, wavered before the task of rebuilding the old homestead. In recognition of his services to the town and as a protest against losing him from the community, his neighbors, almost to a man, rose in spontaneous co-operation with Mr. Pease, helping to feed his cattle, furnishing a home, and in other ways assisting the family through the winter. One of the assets of the town too is the spirit of determination and devotion with which Mr. Pease undertook the work of reconstruction. The whole community joined in an old fashioned "barn raising" with sixty-five men present. This is but the same spirit of co-operation and brotherly kindness which was shown in the '70's when Rev. Alexander Dickson raised a considerable fund to help Milton Smith when his home had been destroyed by lightning; and again just a few years ago when the citizens collected all sorts of household goods as well as money for the family of George Millot, whose home with its contents went up in flames. In 1923 the same cheerful helpfulness enabled Arthur Pease to rebuild his barn which had been destroyed by fire. There are many instances of sturdy, persevering grit and self-sacrifice written into the history of the old town. It is good to give these modern instances of a great spirit that continues. Unquestionably the hardship of wresting a living out of the stern conditions imposed by Nature has been a large factor in producing a hardy race whom their descendants delight to honor and whose strong individuality and heroic deeds are the subject of many familiar and quaint traditions, some of which are preserved in this volume.



AN ABANDONED FARM  
HOUSE OF HENRY S. PEASE

It would be easy to give many illustrations of the loyalty and love than bind the sons and daughters of Middlefield to the hills. Myron L. Crane of Pasadena, California, occasionally revisits the old scenes which his mother, Amanda (Pease) Crane, loved, and gives generously every year to the church to which she was devoted. Bless the memories of these fathers and mothers who are still stimulating their descendants to practical support of the old institutions. Mr. Crane presented both the Highland Agricultural Society and the church with flags during the war period, and gave a Liberty Bond to the church. By loyal help of this practical nature an effective co-operation is still kept up between the reduced population and their scattered relatives. The support of the church from year to year by absent friends as well as by resident members illustrates the strength of the tie that binds the absent ones to those who remain to wrestle for a livelihood on the old homesteads.

Middlefield has always had its citizens of great good sense and force who have qualified for leadership not only in town affairs, but in the larger corporate life. The sturdy enterprise of Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Cook in building up a hotel plant is an instance of this in which the community is the gainer. One is reminded of the persistent efforts of Arthur D. Pease to solve the problem of a water supply. Perhaps the village itself may imitate his successful enterprise. The long career of George W. Cottrell as selectman is evidence that Middlefield trusts those who serve her interests well. Henry S. Pease conducts the combined offices of town clerk and town treasurer so successfully that the community has come to regard him as its leading business man. The quiet, conscientious work of Edwin H. Alderman as school committeeman is well known. Wesley Chipman is a prosperous farmer and active in town leadership. The community finds in Wesley A. Olds a man whose devotion and judgement make him a natural leader. The time would fail us to give honor to all to whom honor is due. It might be pointed out here that the problem of good roads is always a live issue in a town situated on hill sides, as is Middlefield. The question of the best methods of maintaining roads has been the subject of many debates in town meeting, at the store and wherever citizens meet. It is doubtful whether anyone ever permanently held a reputation

as a wise road-builder. Heavy rains and frosts have destroyed reputations. The energetic way in which Middlefield has secured the co-operation of the state promises a first-class highway to Pittsfield in the near future.

The town meeting has flourished and functioned in the life of the community even down to the present. In these latter years the school question and the question of roads and other community utilities have been debated with much wit and sense. Undoubtedly this forum of New England origin has been a mighty force in shaping the life of the town and the independent habits of thought of its citizens. It is gratifying to chronicle here that the chairmanship of the Board of Selectmen was recently exercised ably for two years by the first woman in the state to be so chosen, Mrs. Helen (Wright) Cook, descendant of the Macks and of Matthew Smith, VI.

If justice could be done to all the forces that have shaped Middlefield's history, there should be a chapter devoted to the character and activities of the Middlefield women. Devotion and efficiency have been evident each year as the women organize entertainments, church suppers, and above all the annual church fair, which has come to be a really notable institution for a small village. The teachers of the town schools have in several instances been the daughters of the community and the product of the very schools which they afterward served as teachers. Instances during the last twenty-five years are, Maude Pease, Helen Cook, Addie and Sadie Cottrell, Ida Bell, Nellie and Bridget Cody, Hazel Boyer, Delia Fleming, and Florence Cook. To Miss Nellie Cody of Montclair, New Jersey, has come professional recognition as a teacher which is a matter of pride to the town. The service of Mrs. E. H. Alderman in her devotion to the Sunday School interests of the children of the neighborhood is an instance of the teacher's faithfulness that bears fruit and deserves record. To Miss Ida Bell (Mrs. W. O. Eames) must be given the credit for musical training that has come through the years to the pupils in the homes of the town. For the past ten years the dramatic leadership given to the young people during successive summers by Mrs. Herbert A. Youtz has been a real contribution to the educational forces of the town. Miss Alice B. Church too has been a vigorous friend of all community improvement projects.



MIDDLEFIELD CENTER—1883

MIDDLEFIELD CENTER—1923

The year 1897 marked the beginning of the complete union of the churches of the town, the Baptists first uniting in worship with the Congregational Society and ultimately identifying themselves with that society in a neighborhood church. Middlefield owes much to the liberal spirit inculcated under such pastoral leadership as that of Rev. Joseph M. Rockwood, long pastor of the Baptist flock. A tolerant spirit has obviated any semblance of a church wrangle, and the village church of to-day, nominally Congregational, lives quite as much by the spiritual fruits and vital character bred under Baptist influence. Here the immense service of such men as Metcalf J. Smith and Jonathan McElwain as advisors and harmonizers, can never be adequately recorded.

The pastoral leadership of this period was exercised by Herbert A. Youtz, 1896-98; Henry M. Bowden, 1899-1902; Seelye Bryant, 1902-7; Francis A. Fate, 1907; William A. Estabrook, 1908-13; William T. Bartley, 1913-17; Albert D. Sterns, 1917-18; A. Avery Gates, 1918-19; R. Barclay Simmons, 1920-22. Rev. J. G. Robertson is the present much-loved and efficient pastor.

Of the other cultural influences, the schools of the town and the library have had unusual development for a small town. An intelligent interest in education, inherited from the past, has been a chief influence here. For more than a generation the influence of that rare educator, Metcalf J. Smith, has been felt both in his own constructive work and through his pupils whom he trained and inspired to become teachers. One consequence of this is the comparatively large number of boys and girls who have attended colleges and other educational institutions. Through this fact, Middlefield has kept in living touch with the best leadership of the times during the past fifty years. The literacy of the town has ranked high. The library, too, has been pronounced to be the best selected and largest collection of books with the largest circulation, owned by any town of similar size. Certainly the reading interest of the town is unusual as a result of the cultivation of its taste for these things. Mrs. Lucy (Smith) Newton, Metcalf J. Smith, Miss Kate W. Smith, Mrs. Gertrude L. Pease and Grace Cook have been successively librarians. It may not be out of place here to say that an adequate fire-proof building for the library and for a museum



of Middlefield relics would be a noble and serviceable monument to perpetuate the memory as well as the substance of the old order that is changing.

A series of organizations has successively expressed and shaped the spiritual ideals of the community. The instruction of the children in sobriety and good citizenship was for several years carried on in Company D, Hampshire Division of the Massachusetts Loyal Temperance Legion, ably led by Miss Susie Rockwood, Mrs. William E. Morse, and Miss Kate W. Smith. The Middlefield Progressive Club was a literary and debating society that flourished in the early '90's. This promoted the social and literary activities of the young people, organized straw-rides and held an annual literary, dramatic and musical entertainment of much merit. Members of the younger generations in the Combs, Alderman, Smith, Pease and Wright families are remembered among the leaders in those days. We should not omit mention of the Middlefield Choral Club, which, under the direction of Rev. Herbert A. Youtz and Professor Gerald B. Smith, for three years, at least, presented cantatas and concerts in several of the neighboring villages as well as in the home town. *Under the Palms, Ruth, the Moabitess, and The Haymakers*, which they staged in Worthington, Huntington, Becket, Chester and Hinsdale, were the more elaborate and successful of these productions. The club's excellent male quartet later carried off first honors at a musical contest held in Worthington.

The Middlefield Country Club was organized in 1902 and flourished with vigor for several years. It endeavored with a great degree of success to unite the local residents and summer visitors in working for the better interests of the whole community. Among its effective accomplishments was the removal of the old horse sheds from their conspicuous position on the main horizon line. This was done under the protests of some now gone to their rest, but the results of this and other similar efforts has been to increase the general appreciation of the beauties of our natural situation.

Through the efforts of Rev. Henry M. Bowden and Professor L. A. Youtz a natural history collection was started and a case built for its display. A tiny Triangle Park was constructed in front of the church and other steps taken to beautify the village.

Through the enthusiastic efforts of the late Edward Wright a delightful picnic ground, Bonnie Dell, was cleared, a cool spring was opened and a watering trough set up. The first piano for the town hall was provided by the funds of this club. The installation of the telephone line was due to the efforts of the club to promote the welfare of the town. Through the activities of this organization many entertainments were held and considerable money was raised for the purpose of village improvement. An Old Home Week picnic was inaugurated, which for some years has operated only intermittently, but has now developed into the annual Field Day. The record of vigorous, constructive work by the Country Club emphasizes the importance of a live organization to keep all the people working together for a better community life.

Perhaps the most enduring memorial of the Country Club will prove to be the present volume of the History of Middlefield. The desire to preserve the records and achievements of the town before they pass from the minds of the older citizens, led to the formation of an Historical Committee in which Metcalf J. Smith and his nephew, Edward Church Smith, were the most active members. This committee received modest appropriations from the club's funds from time to time, to pay a portion of the expense of research work, but for the most part the preparation of the history has been a work of unrewarded devotion on the part of the authors.

As an active organization, the Country Club long ago ceased to function, after a period of real, constructive service to the town. But funds still remaining in the club's treasury from days of its prosperity, have been recently appropriated by the surviving members to help in publishing this history. So the Country Club has had an honorable part in the inception as well as the completion of the history which has thus been prepared.

The Middlefield Grange, after several years of inactivity, was revived in 1912, through the initiative of Mr. and Mrs. John Bryan, and has ever since been a singularly vigorous social and educational factor. It has developed leadership and debating ability, and promoted social unity and the sense of form that comes from ritual usage. Its influence in the town has been immensely significant in many ways, especially in creating a unity

of community life, and establishing intelligent touch with agricultural development. Among the Worthy Masters have been developed such leaders as John T. Bryan, Henry S. Pease, Peter F. Boyer and Elisha Culver.

A local enterprise which at least deserves mention here is the Middlefield Cemetery Association, which was organized in May, 1921, with the object of raising funds for the perpetual care of the cemetery premises. Several hundred dollars have been put in the bank as a principal fund, of which the interest is to be used in care of the cemetery grounds. Here is a movement in which the scattered sons and daughters of Middlefield certainly have a vital interest. The neglected and forgotten graves in many instances cry out in protest against human forgetfulness. The local citizens have started this worthy movement, but they have imperative need of the help of every loyal friend of Middlefield's past.

Another recent enterprise worthy of the support of all friends of Middlefield is "the Hillsman," a modest four page bulletin appearing four times a year. It was initiated by Sumner J. Brown, a summer resident, a graduate of Amherst College, now studying at the Episcopal Theological Seminary at Cambridge, Massachusetts. Though this publication has been managed largely by the young people, its columns have been open to all Middlefielders who have something of value gleaned from their travels, reminiscences or research to tell their hill-top friends. These contributions appear in verse as well as in prose. This publication, consequently makes a wide appeal, and its subscribers look forward to the appearance of its numbers with increasing interest.

When the United States entered the World War in 1917. Middlefield was not found wanting, but bore her full measure of responsibility in raising her quota of men and money as well as serving in the other ways in which citizens were called upon to help win the war.

The roll of honor bears the names of many Middlefield boys whose records are given more or less in detail in Appendix E of this volume. All were prepared for service though but few were privileged to reach the trenches and the battlefield.

Francis J. Cone saw overseas service, taking part in the St.

Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives in September and November, 1918, as private 1st Class, Co. E, 401st Telegraph Battalion, Signal Corps.

Nicholas Palamalda, as private in Co. B, 104th Infantry and in other branches of the service was overseas from October, 1917 to July, 1919.

Richard A. Waite, after serving in the Coast Artillery was in Europe from September, 1918, to March, 1919.

George E. Millot, with the 49th Infantry, 4th Division, reached France in July, 1918, became corporal and sailed for America in January, 1919.

John S. Gregory in the 23rd Engineering Corps, Co. D, was in France fourteen months returning in June, 1919.

Harold A. Boyer, after serving in the Coast Artillery, started for France in September, 1918, but serious illness confined him to a hospital in England until December when he returned home.

Richard D. Sweeney, Jr., with 74th Co. 2nd Division U. S. Marines was sent to France in October, 1918, returning the following summer.

Andrew Dumbrosky enlisted in the Polish Army, was sent to Canada, and sailed for France in July, 1918. After sixteen months service there he served in Poland seven months and was the last of the Middlefield boys to be sent home.

Harold McElwain Pease, the first Middlefield boy to enlist, became corporal of Battery F, 21st Field Artillery, but was discharged in November, 1917, because of ill health.

Leon M. Bryan, drafted in the summer of 1917, was discharged in October because of defective vision.

Ernest L. Boyer enlisted in the Navy in February, 1918, and was in the Naval Training Station at Newport, Rhode Island, when discharged in December, 1918.

Robert S. Pease enlisted in the Coast Battery in May, 1918, was sent to Fort Banks and for a while guarded the U. S. M. Reservation at Nahant, Massachusetts.

Bernard B. Fleming, drafted September, 1918, was at Camp Upson and Fort Benjamin Harrison and assigned to the Engineering Corps Supply Company.

Ralph H. Pease, inducted November, 1918, was private in 1st Training Battalion, 151st Depot Brigade.

In addition to the above roll there were other members of Middlefield families and former residents whose enlistments do not appear on the Middlefield official records. John F. Cody served in the Army Intelligence Department. He was discharged on December 19, 1918. John Wm. Fleming enlisted April 30, 1918, in Erie, Pennsylvania, and was discharged December 6, 1918. Thomas Henry Fleming, Jr., enlisted August 17, 1917, in the Supply Company, 104th Infantry. He served in France and fought at Chemin des Dames, Toul Sector, Marne Salient, the Aisne-Marne offensive, St. Mihiel, Troyon, and Meuse-Argonne. He was discharged April 28, 1919. Harry B. Johnson enlisted in Springfield and was commissioned first lieutenant in the Ordnance Department, January 23, 1918; was transferred to Paris, France, and assigned to the Purchase and Finance Division of Ordnance; served with distinction and was promoted to the rank of captain. Captain Johnson has been commander of the General Charles Devens Post of the American Legion, Worcester, Massachusetts. Joseph Kelley enlisted in the Navy from Northampton and was still in the service in 1923. A former pastor, Rev. Henry M. Bowden, did effective service with the Y. M. C. A. in France among the Slavic Troops.

The Middlefield Red Cross Auxiliary was organized in August, 1917, with a membership of 112. The officers were Mrs. A. D. Pease, president; Mrs. G. E. Cook, treasurer; Mrs. P. F. Boyer, secretary; Mrs. J. T. Bryan, chairman of knitting department. Practically every woman in town was enrolled and their activities in turning out sweaters, socks, comfort kits and the like were truly prodigious. In all requisitions called for, the Middlefield Red Cross exceeded its quota. In addition to this practical service, considerable money was raised for the Red Cross War Fund.

Heroic efforts were made in the successive campaigns for selling Liberty Loan Bonds. The various drives resulted in a total of \$25,000 for Middlefield, and in each case the quota was greatly exceeded. Meanwhile patriotic meetings were held by the Grange and other organizations. On July 4, 1918, an Honor Roll Board was erected on the village green with a presentation speech by Louis C. Smith. As the boys came home they were publicly welcomed by the citizens. On November 12, 1919, there

was a patriotic meeting in the town hall celebrating Armistice Day and Victory. It was a memorable day for Middlefield.

A beautiful Flag Furling service was held at the church on Sunday, August 22, 1920, participated in by Dr. John Brittan Clark and Dr. Lewis T. Reed, several ex-service men and a number of young women. Mrs. George McElwain furled the flag and gave it into the keeping of the town amid impressive ceremonies. Thus was formally ended the honorable war record of Middlefield. The town had evaded no sacrifice, though happily all of our enlisted men came marching safely home.

In 1919 the Middlefield Improvement Association was formed with the serious purpose of developing Middlefield interests and intelligently studying the factors that are to shape the future. Among the chief promoters was A. G. Hatch, who was elected its first president. This association is affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce of the state, thus seeking to avoid the dangers of a narrow isolation and to become a part of the co-operative life of the greater community. First steps have been taken in providing a village lighting plant, and the permanent problem of an adequate supply of water is under discussion. Both the town hall and the church are now electrically lighted. With commendable prudence a chemical fire engine has been purchased, but the largest achievement of the association thus far has been the successful agitation for a State Road running through the town, connecting with the State Road at Hinsdale on the northwest and Chester on the south. Appropriations for this work have been made and some miles of the road are already an accomplished fact, with the prospect of completion within a year or two. This road promises to be of great significance to Middlefield, offering as it does a "scenic route" east and west which will shorten the distance and offer competition with the most attractive routes. It will not be surprising if the future development of the town as a summering region shall be greatly accelerated by thus supplying an attractive thoroughfare which will inevitably bring many visitors. With characteristic energy the citizens of Middlefield and their friends subscribed \$4,000 for the road and appropriated an additional \$5,000 by town meeting vote, as a first step in securing the state appropriation. Such energy and unity of action augurs well for the future

development of the town if wise leadership is followed and the best community welfare is persistently served.

While it may seem at times that the ultimate prosperity of the Middlefield farmer will to a large extent be dependent upon the growth of the town as a summer resort, it can also be argued that the latter is dependent upon the former. Summer residence is retarded by the lack of skilled and unskilled labor,—due partly to gradually declining population and partly to the unfortunate fact that the summer people want help just at the time when the farmer in the midst of his own busy season is least able to give it. The summer resident sometimes aggravates this condition by purchasing a large farm which he cannot work,—thereby aiding in the diminishing of the farm population, and causing a depreciation in the value of land. With a readjustment of agricultural conditions, some of these farms will probably pass back into the hands of agriculturalists. On the other hand, where small parcels of land, particularly waste land or pasture, are purchased for summer cottages, real estate values are generally increased.

The agricultural problems of the Middlefield farmers are probably not essentially different from those of farmers in other sections of the country. It seems to be generally agreed among students of farm life that the present condition of the farmers is largely caused by organizations for the marketing of food products, which have gradually increased their power to control the prices paid to the unorganized farmers for their produce as well as the prices received from the organized consumers. A few years ago Secretary Wilson, of the Agricultural Department, having in mind the packers and other combinations, said: “Were there a free market for the eastern raisers of stock, milk and food products generally, with the middlemen’s associations properly restricted, eastern farming would probably be able to hold its own against manufacturing and compete with the manufacturer for labor.”

Another author writes as follows: “Some people say that it is the glint and glamor of the city which takes the boys and girls from the farm. Not so. Since our first parents were driven from the Garden of Eden men have been driven, not lured, from country life. Remove the artificial handicaps from

agriculture, so that reasonable profits, modern conveniences and comforts are possible on the farm, and they will be filled with intelligent, industrious people, and our teeming millions fed better than ever before, and that at a price not prohibitive to the common laborer.''

One hopeful phase of the situation is the marvelous influence of modern inventions upon country life. At the opening of the century Middlefield had no telephone, no rural delivery, no automobiles. Now nearly every farmer has all three. The possibilities of the radio for entertainment and instruction in the farmer's home have hardly begun to be realized. State roads will eventually be kept open in the winter so that city and country people will be within easy access of each other at any time of year. It is no wild dream to imagine a bus line running between Chester and Hinsdale along the Middlefield Ridge as the connecting link between the bus lines which already connect those towns with Springfield and Pittsfield respectively. Improved trucking facilities and co-operative organizations will help to equalize prices between producer and consumer.

There is something distinctive in the spirit of sympathy and close co-operation that exists between the local residents and the summer population. This is doubtless partly due to the fact that the summer guests are in many cases a return to the old town of descendants of the older families. These relatives and friends of the Middlefield people have been lovers of the local scenes and their traditions, and have themselves contributed to the notable spirit of neighborhood hospitality and unity. For years Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Francis Root came back each summer to revisit Mr. Root's native village where he had begun his business career. Their alert intelligence and kindly interest will be long remembered. They brought a generous contribution to the social life of the village and radiated an atmosphere of friendliness. The same should be said of the late Thomas Martin and Sophia (Smith) Martin, his wife, whose pleasant summer home welcomed many a guest who has since learned to love Middlefield. Under fortunate leadership this spirit of unity has been cultivated in the interests of a larger community spirit and the promotion of a better Middlefield. Uniting in common enterprises such as the church, the Grange, Country Club, Improvement As-



sociation, social, musical and dramatic programs, and co-operating in many projects to raise money for village improvement, Middlefield has acquired a distinctive spirit of friendliness and unity. The future task for all these organizations is, in large part, to perpetuate and deepen this neighborly tradition. Thus the worthy spirit of the past brings into view the Future Middlefield even greater than the Old.

Among the summer residents who have made real contributions to the life of Middlefield by their enterprise and generous interest may be mentioned Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Abbe, David C. Coe, Charles W. Shaw, Louis C. Smith, Gerald B. Smith, R. F. McElwain, Herbert A. Youtz, Newton Smith, William Birnie, Dr. George H. Ferris, Dr. John Brittan Clark, Rev. Louis T. Reed, Mrs. W. A. Pearson, Miss Emily L. Smith, Philip M. Smith, Clifton D. Jackson, Francis A. Fate. Miss Alice B. Church and John Storms have given helpful leadership to the boys and young men of the community. The town is indebted to these and others for friendly co-operation that has brought encouragement and strength for betterment, and appreciation by the citizens of Middlefield. Here, in this unity is our strength and glory.

Time fails us to call the roll of loyal descendants who still love the Middlefield Hill and its history, and who come back from time to time to express their love in some new form of service for the community. Such a list would include very many of the old names; Churches, Roots, Smiths, Peases, Graveses, Wrights, Aldermans, McElwains, Bryans and many others. What a royal friendship it is! "God bless us everyone!"